Chapter 1

The Meeting.

It is no wonder why they call it the land of smiles, with its beautiful waterfalls, luscious landscapes, and many fun activities, not to mention the long hikes and a visit to the number one attraction, the Elephant Conservation center. You don't have to tell eight-year-old twins, Chana Rong, and Anong this because they already know. They have been living in Chiang Mai all their life; it is just recently they have move onto one of the many support Elephant Conservation centers with their father, Mongkut. Their mother was killed in action while on a special OPPS mission for the Navy Intelligent. The twins spent most of their lives living with their Aunt Mali, who lived just a mile down the road from the center. Mongkut knows one of the workers and gets a job there. After the death of their mother, Mongkut, their father, ask to be station near home so he could be close to his family. He still pulls duty away from home, because he is apart of the army Special Forces team. Aunt Mali takes the twins in, when Mongkut is away for months. They don't like it when their father has to leave because they know one day he may not come home. They also don't like having to leave the Elephant Conservation center; their Aunt Mali tries to take them there at least twice a week. Chana Rong and Anong like being around the elephants and helping out at the conservation, but not when Virot is around. He is a mean man and doesn't like children. At least that is what the twins think. Aunt Mali calls ahead of time to make sure Virot is not working on the days the twins come to conservation, to avoid confrontation.

"My niece and nephew have done nothing wrong, Mr. Rattanakosin! In fact, they have been very helpful since their father started working here. Now I know he cannot always be here at work, because of his military duties, but you have no right to be mean to these children." Aunt Mali would tell Virot in Thai.

"I don't give a flute about these kids or the fact Mongkut is serving in the armed forces! That has nothing to do with me at all! Just keep those brats away from this place! Mr. Cholong put me in charge, and I say who can come and who cannot come!" Virot was only a foot taller than Aunt Mali, and his Thai were more northern than hers, giving his voice a more threating sound to it. Chana Rong and Anong would hide behind their Aunt's legs and tremble, but she would stand up to Virot, who was closer to her age.

"Mr. Cholong says, 'it was perfectly okay for my brother to bring his children along'. He said 'it will be good for their soul and would also help them to relieve any hurtful feelings they have built up inside of them', but to keep from getting into any more conflict with you, Mr. Ratt. I will call ahead of time, and make sure, you are off on the days, and Chana Rong and Anong want to come help. Is that fine with you?" Aunt Mali screamed back at Virot. He looked at her, raised his hands, mumbled something, and walked away.

As soon as Virot was gone, the twins would run out from behind Aunt Mali, giggling and laughing. They couldn't wait to ride the elephants, but they knew, they had to pick up the entire elephants dun. The twins would wear a bandana around their face to keep out some of the smell, not only that, but also the dust off their face. It is a good thing they only have to clean up after one elephant each because Chana Rong will not eat, for lack of a weak stomach. Aunt Mali will have them go play in the jungle behind the conservation for a couple of hours just to get his mind off of his stomach. This seems to help because Chana Rong and Anong always find something interesting. They also knew not to adventure off to far away from the center, or otherwise they may get lost in the jungle.

Chana Rong and Anong while in the jungle, gather huge vines, elephant ears, twigs, branches, and any moss they can find. They bend and twist the items they collect into a shape that look like a man, a man like Virot. After they finished making the fake Virot, Chana Rong and Anong stand the dummy up, it was about a head taller than the two of them. They started throwing rocks at the dummy until it fell over. They would stand him up again and repeat the process all over, jumping up and down, and claiming victory. An hour later they will hear their Aunt Mali calling, and will come running out of the jungle.

"What did you make in the jungle, this time?" she would ask them; for she knew her brother's children always have something up their sleeve.

" A mock replica of Mr. Rattanakosin!" Anong will announce proudly.

" Well, that was nice of..." Aunt Mali will start to say.

"And threw rocks at him!" Chana Rong blurted out loud. Aunt Mali just looks at the two of them and shook her head.

"Did we do something wrong, Aunt Mali?" Anong ask.

"No, sweetie, I guess not. Mr. Rattanakosin, just needs help understanding children"

"He understands us! He was a kid himself. Chana Rong shouted. "And if I could, I would throw rocks at him, but all I have is that mock dummy, we made out there in the jungle today!" Chana Rong said angrily.

"Wow! Where did you learn to speak such big words?" Ask Aunt Mali.

"Why, from daddy a course." Chana Rong answers her.

"I'm in pressed, but it is not nice to talk bad about someone. You shouldn't want to throw rocks at anyone."

“ I don’t want to throw rocks at anyone. I only want to throw rocks at Mr. Rattanakosin.”

One of the workers from the conservation center approaches Aunt Mali and the twins.

"He's ready for them,” he tells Aunt Mali.

"Go on now... Have fun... I'll see you, when you get back." The twins take off running towards the elephant pens.

The workers walk the elephant down through the trail, pass some rocks, and down by a waterfall. Chana Rong and Anong love riding the elephants, because they say they have a much better view, when they are sitting on top of the elephants. There is always something new and different to see each time the children ride the elephants. When Chana Rong and Anong are not with the elephants, they are usually playing around the waterfall.

"Maybe, we will find something interesting today?" Chana Rong spoke in Thai to his sister as they were heading out behind the conservation with their little pack lunch. Their Aunt Mali has given them each a walking stick, a slingshot for protection and a first aid kit with a snakebite antidote. Today, the twins are excited, because their father is coming home to stay.

"Let's go check out the waterfall, we may find some pretty flowers, to bring back to father, when he comes home" Anong suggested.

"Ugh! Flowers are for girls."

Anong apparently did not hear Chana Rong response about the flowers as they were walking through the jungle, because her mind is elsewhere.

"I think I seen some lotus in the lake near the waterfall"

"I'm not picking any flowers!" Chana Rong said as he put his walking stick in between to rocks and pull himself up. Anong knew how much her brother wanted to be like his father, but she didn't realize helping her pick flowers were such a big deal.

"Well, there are a few rocks around the waterfall, you can grab some of those. We can also grab some ferns and other leafy plants." Anong said as she pulls herself up onto the same rock behind her brother. The workers have already laid out the trail, so it is very easy for the twins to find their way around the waterfall. It only took them about fifteen minutes to make it to the waterfall.

"Tag you're it" Chana Rong yelled as he tagged Anong on the back, and took off running, dropping his backpack and stick on the ground. Anong drops her backpack as well and chases after him. They ran all around the area near the waterfall, chasing after each other. Chana Rong quickly jumps into some bushes to hide from Anong. She ran right past where he was hiding, by a couple of feet. When she realizes had disappeared, she stop and looked around calling out his name.

"Chana Rong ...Chana Rong ...Chana Rong!" Anong yelled her throat hurting from screaming too much. The foliage is thick and easily buries Chana Rong. All of a sudden, Chana Rong feels a nudge. He looks behind him but doesn’t see anything. He is nudge again, this time he stands up; Anong is still looking for him. He is nudge a third time.

“Cut it out, Anong!’ Chana Rong yells.

“What are you yelling about!” she asks. Anong hears her brother, but she cannot see him, again Chana Rong gets nudge.

“I know you are back here!” Chana Rong shouts as he is finally pushed out into the open in front of his sister. Startle and confuse, he ask. “How’d you get out here?"

“What are you talking about?”

“Maybe, we should go back.”

“Okay, but let me gather all the things we collect for father.” Anong opens her backpack and she and her brother started to put the rocks, sticks, and moss inside a container, she pulled out of her pack. Chana Rong stops sudden, because he hears something move in the bushes.

“ Something is moving in those bushes over there.” Chana Rong said pointing to the foliage. Anong, looks up, but sees nothing.

“I don’t see anything” She said going back to what she was doing before.

The leaves rattler again, Chana Rong slowly taps his sister on the shoulder. Anong looks up again, but sees nothing.

“Chana Rong, stop lying or I’m telling Aunt Mali”

“I’m not lying.” Chana Rong runs over to his pack, he unzips it and reaches in for his slingshot. Anong stands there watching him as he runs over to the stream by the waterfall and grab a hand full of rocks.

“What are you doing?”

“I told you something is moving over there in the bushes.”

Anong growls and throws her arms up in the air. She walks over to the water and plops down on rock.